



FOODFACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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Food Safety

It's Especially Important for At-Risk Groups

The food supply in the United States is among the safest in the world. However, when certain disease-causing bacteria or pathogens contaminate food, they can cause foodborne illness, often called “food poisoning.” The Federal government estimates that there are about 48 million cases of foodborne illness annually — the equivalent of sickening 1 in 6 Americans each year. And each year, these illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. Although everyone is susceptible, some people are at greater risk for developing foodborne illness.

Who's At-Risk?

If you — or someone you care for — are in one of these high-risk groups, it's especially important to practice safe food handling. Vulnerable people are not only at increased risk of contracting a foodborne illness, but are also more likely to have a lengthier illness, undergo hospitalization, or even die.

Pregnant Women

Changes during pregnancy alter the mother's immune system, making pregnant women more susceptible to foodborne illness. Harmful bacteria can also cross the placenta and infect an unborn baby whose immune system is under-developed and not able to fight infection. Foodborne illness during pregnancy is serious and can lead to miscarriage, premature delivery, stillbirth, sickness or the death of a newborn baby.



Young Children

Young children are more at risk for foodborne illness because their immune systems are still developing.



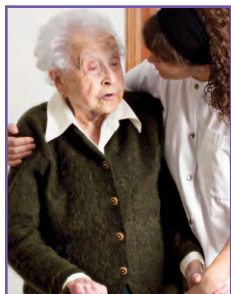
People with Immune Systems Weakened by Disease or Medical Treatment

The immune system is the body's natural reaction or response to “foreign invasion.” In healthy people, a properly functioning immune system readily fights off harmful bacteria and other pathogens that cause infection. However, the immune systems of **transplant patients** and people with certain illnesses, such as **HIV/AIDS**, **cancer**, and **diabetes**, are often weakened from the disease process and/or the side effects of some treatments, making them susceptible to many types of infections — like those that can be caught on by harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. In addition, diabetes may lead to a slowing of the rate at which food passes through the stomach and intestines, allowing harmful foodborne pathogens an opportunity to multiply.



Older Adults

As people age, their immune system and other organs become sluggish in recognizing and ridding the body of harmful bacteria and other pathogens that cause infections, such as foodborne illness. Many older adults have also been diagnosed with one or more chronic conditions, such as diabetes, arthritis, cancer, or cardiovascular disease, and are taking at least one medication. The chronic disease process and/or the side effects of some medications may also weaken the immune system. In addition, stomach acid decreases as people get older, and stomach acid plays an important role in reducing the number of bacteria in the intestinal tract — and the risk of illness.



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Foods to Avoid

If you are at greater risk of foodborne illness,

You are advised not to eat:

- Raw or undercooked meat or poultry.
- Raw fish, partially cooked seafood (such as shrimp and crab), and refrigerated smoked seafood.
- Raw shellfish (including oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops) and their juices.
- Unpasteurized (raw) milk and products made with raw milk, like yogurt and cheese.
- Soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk, such as Feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined, and Mexican-style cheeses (such as Queso Fresco, Panela, Asadero, and Queso Blanco).
- Raw or undercooked eggs or foods containing raw or undercooked eggs, including certain homemade salad dressings (such as Caesar salad dressing), homemade cookie dough and cake batters, and homemade eggnog.
NOTE: Most pre-made foods from grocery stores, such as Caesar dressing, pre-made cookie dough, or packaged eggnog are made with pasteurized eggs.

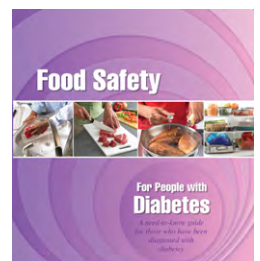
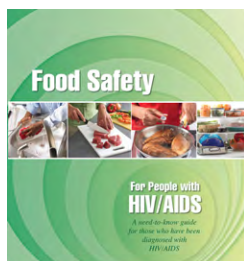
- Unwashed fresh vegetables, including lettuce/salads.
- Unpasteurized fruit or vegetable juices (these juices will carry a warning label).
- Hot dogs, luncheon meats (cold cuts), fermented and dry sausage, and other deli-style meats, poultry products, and smoked fish — unless they are reheated until steaming hot.
- Salads (without added preservatives) prepared on site in a deli-type establishment, such as ham salad, chicken salad, or seafood salad.
- Unpasteurized, refrigerated pâtés or meat spreads.
- Raw sprouts (alfalfa, bean, or any other sprout).

Foodborne Illness: Know the Symptoms

Symptoms of foodborne illness usually appear 12 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food, but may occur between 30 minutes and 4 weeks later. Symptoms include:

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (may be bloody), and abdominal pain
- Flulike symptoms such as fever, headache, and body ache

If you suspect that you could have a foodborne illness, **contact your physician or health care provider right away!**



For more information or to order free copies of any or all of the brochures for at-risk audiences, go to www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/risk/index.html or contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at **1-888-MPHOTLINE (1-888-674-6854)** or by email at mp hotline.fsis@usda.gov



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For more information, contact: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Food Information Line at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (toll free), 10 AM to 4 PM ET, Monday through Friday. Or visit the FDA Web site at www.fda.gov